

Editors' Preface

Lynette Hunter, Alex Lichtenfels, Heather Nolan, and John Zibell

Copresence with the Camera emerged through a series of ongoing conversations between politically motivated artists. These conversations started informally, between collaborators at various events, exhibitions, and conferences, and among colleagues and friends working on filmmaking and critical approaches to working with a camera. Over three years of listening to and talking with each other, unexpected resonances between artistic practices led to collaborations that were proposed and later actualized, and to excitement over the revelation of common goals. Together, we felt there was an opportunity to put together a collection of critically engaged artists' writings and documents about the art we were and are still making, and this is the work this journal issue continues. It is our intention that these pieces exist in a dialogue with both one another and the works that they document. The relationship between artmaking practice and academic writing is complex. However, we firmly believe that reading a piece about a work can never provide an adequate substitute for experiencing the work itself. For this reason, where it is feasible and appropriate, we have provided links to the works that have been written about, and we encourage you to watch them alongside their documents.

The exploration of these conversations in the materials of this journal is intended to be both stimulating and constructive in whatever field of creative practice you may work, or indeed if you are reading for general interest. Aside from these contexts of working with a camera, one element that has consistently motivated us to put together this journal issue is that it is often a great pleasure to learn about how artists make their work—what they do and why, and how it affects both them and their audiences. We asked each contributor to think at least in part about what it is like to be present with a camera in a somatic or phenomenological way. We hope that the essays, documents, and interviews collected here maintain the sense of discovery and exhilarating abandon in artistic experimentation and risk that all of the contributors try to cultivate in their work.

The first essay in the journal issue is Alex Lichtenfels' "Introduction: Practice as Research, Politics, Affect, and the Camera," which grounds the collection in ongoing conversations held by practitioners, critics, and academics. We hope that this brief "Editors' Preface" and this "Introduction" give a clear rationale for the collection, documenting how it engages with contexts such as practice as research, academic disciplines, political action, artmaking practice, and the cultural significance of the camera. Beyond this, when reading and viewing the work of contributors as both artmakers and documenters, particular themes, consonances, and methods inevitably emerge, and the collection is structured on the loose areas that excited us the most.

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The loci we have chosen that are central to the contributors' practices are alternative methods and histories, devised filmmaking practices, and cross-disciplinary methodologies. We have structured the issue around these three areas. Inevitably, any attempt to classify artmakers in groupings such as these is doomed to failure, because it will always reduce the individuality of particular works to categories that their totality will always exceed. The structure here is rather an attempt to highlight common things that artists are thinking about and common methods that they are using in their practice—the structure aims to be helpful by elucidating contexts and practices that could contain the specific potential for politically affective work.

Alternative Methods and Histories

Several of the artists contributing to this collection are challenging established histories of places, myths, and events by retelling those histories from alternative perspectives, and by using the camera to generate alternative processes of artmaking which reflect those perspectives. The connection between perspective and process is deliberate. Histories are always ideologically inflected not only through the content they select but through the ways they are told. Offering alternative political histories necessitates alternative ways of telling those histories, and affective practice is one way of approaching this task.

Kevin Lee, “Instrument of Reflection: A Study in Smartphone Filming”

Jeff Burke and Jared J. Stein, “Live Performance and Post-Cinematic Filmmaking”

Anuj Vaidya, “Forest Tales: Toward a Practice of Eco-Cinema”

Frank Wilderson III and Cecilio M. Cooper, “Interviews on Critical Race and Trans/Queer Approaches to Filmmaking: Incommensurabilities—The Limits of Redress, Intramural Indemnity, and Extramural Auditorship”

Devised Filmmaking Practices

One of the legacies of the film industry's history is that the vast majority of the time, a premium is placed on preparation and mapping out a film in advance as a way of saving time and money during the expensive period of filming on set. One of the possibilities that the reduction in the price of filmmaking equipment affords is the increased ability to treat the on-set portion of the production process as an essential part of devising the creative process and enabling the creative act, rather than as the execution of a blueprint. Devising in this sense means not only not having a script, but learning new methods of responding to particular places, people, materials and/or technologies (such as the camera) as part of an affective politics of filmmaking. This is the approach taken by several of our contributors, all in slightly different ways.

Chris Brown, “Installed in Chalk: Mapping Screen Performance in *Coccolith* (2018)”

Alex Lichtenfels, “Materiality of Nothingness: Inspiration, Collaboration, and Craft in Devised Filmmaking”

Interview: Kirsten Johnson with Alex Lichtenfels, “Finding a Person and Losing a Person: On *CameraPerson*”

John Zibell and Heather Nolan, “Action with Camera: Making the Future Audience Present”

Interview: Carlo Hintermann with Ilya Noé and Alex Lichtenfels, “The Film that Breathes: On *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *The Book of Vision*”

Cross-disciplinary Methodologies

Finally, several artmakers in this book come from non-filmmaking backgrounds, yet have been using cameras in their work. These examples offer up methodologies of using cameras that often come from different lineages of arts practice and different cultural sites. These generate alternative ways of knowing by incorporating a new element into established, yet ever-evolving modes of practice, to

explore previously unarticulated ways of being. The methodologies they draw upon range from theatre, to dance, to circus, to installation art, to the performance lecture, to holographic performance. At the same time, the alternative uses to which these practitioners and scholars put the camera open up new approaches in the disciplines from which they draw and bring different perspectives to lived experience.

Diego Aguilar, Regina Gutiérrez, Álvaro Hernández, “On ABSENCE Doings: The Cuts of Disappearance”

Darrin Martin, “Audio Description as a Generative Process in Art Practice”

Interview/Script: Rabih Mroué with Lynette Hunter, “Attending to the Glitch: *Sand in the Eyes*”

We would like with this issue to make a case for a conception of practice as research as a challenge to established ways of knowing through the camera in interdisciplinary screen production contexts, as well as offering alternative approaches to practice as research in performance contexts more generally. The contributions to the collection work on how co-presence with the camera forms a compelling and significant point of political enquiry within such contexts. The issue comprises a constellation of documents that may help practitioners who work with cameras in both professional and academic contexts to attune themselves to the politically affective possibilities of their practice. Finally, we hope that by interweaving documentation of some mould-breaking artmakers’ practices, this issue will prompt scholars, students, and artists to think through alternative approaches to the use of the camera in both filmmaking and film study.